



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

## 1002.0 - Australian Statistics Advisory Council - Annual Report, 2016-17

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## Summary

### Transmittal Letter

#### TRANSMITTAL LETTER

The Hon Michael McCormack MP  
Minister for Small Business

Dear Minister

I have pleasure in submitting the Annual Report of the Australian Statistics Advisory Council for the year ending 30 June 2017.

The Annual Report outlines the work undertaken by the Council and is submitted to you for presentation to Parliament under subsection 24(1) of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*.

The Annual Report is dated on the day I approved the text for printing.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Gary Banks AO  
Chairperson

7 September 2017

## Australian Statistics Advisory Council Mission

### AUSTRALIAN STATISTICS ADVISORY COUNCIL MISSION

To contribute to the effective development of Australia's statistical assets, by providing the Minister and the Statistician with independent, relevant and timely advice on national priorities.

## Foreword

### FOREWORD

The Australian Statistics Advisory Council (ASAC) has a distinguished record as an independent source of advice to the ABS and its responsible Minister on Australia's statistics and emerging needs and priorities. Geoff Allen AM was ASAC Chairperson for a decade prior to my recent appointment. That includes just over half the period covered by this annual report. At the outset, therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to record the Council's deep appreciation for Geoff Allen's leadership and for his commitment to the institution and its mission.

During the past year, ASAC met once under Geoff's chairmanship and once under my own. The

Council's discussions covered a range of topics, but there was a particular focus on the 2016 Census and resulting actions, developments in the important area of data integration, and the challenges of statistical prioritisation under budgetary pressure.

As detailed in this report, while the quality of the data from the Census has proven to be comparable to that of previous Censuses, the digital failure on Census night and prior issues around the retention of personal information were of significant public and political concern. The Council discussed with the ABS the importance of its public engagement activities to the rebuilding of trust, and of it taking on board governance and other lessons from last year's events, including recommendations from subsequent independent reviews. The ABS is to be commended for the extent and decisiveness of its response.

Australia lags other countries, and notably our close neighbour New Zealand, in its capacity to access and connect data from different sources that are jointly relevant to key areas of policy development or service delivery. This has been partly a product of our federal system of government, partly a matter of 'territory', but also reflective of legitimate concerns about privacy. As the opportunity cost of fragmented data systems has become more apparent, support has grown in a number of jurisdictions for 'joined up' data that is both more accessible and fit for purpose, while recognising legitimate community concerns. A number of welcome initiatives have commenced or are in train. A key one at the Commonwealth level, aptly titled 'Data Integration Partnership for Australia (DIPA)', represents the culmination of work by the ABS over a number of years, with strong support from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The recent Productivity Commission inquiry into Data Availability and Use has further highlighted the importance of sharing data for individuals' right to know, but also for the potential economic benefits. Its recommendations are far reaching, including the creation of new national institutional arrangements. Effective implementation will be key. Making effective use of the ABS and other existing expert bodies will be crucial to this. Equally, proposed 'national interest data sets' would benefit from groundwork already conducted by the ABS, with encouragement from the Council, on 'Essential Statistical Assets for Australia'.

Australia's society and economy are changing at an unprecedented pace. Capturing such changes in a systematic way through national statistical collections will be increasingly valuable both to government and the community. While budgetary constraints are necessary in this area, as in others, the Council is concerned that ongoing reductions in the ABS appropriation are placing key statistical assets in jeopardy. As the American economist William Baumol famously demonstrated in his theory of 'cost disease', inherent limits on productivity gains for certain public services mean that at some point quality inevitably falls with funding. It is important that this be recognised and addressed.

I sincerely thank Council members for their contributions over the past year, and the secretariat for its support for the Council and for me personally since my appointment.

**Professor Gary Banks AO**

Chairperson

## About ASAC

### ABOUT ASAC

ASAC was established by the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*.

Under subsection 18(1) of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*, the Council is to advise the Minister and the Australian Statistician on:

- a. *the improvement, extension and co-ordination of statistical services provided for public purposes in Australia;*

- b. *annual and longer term priorities and programs of work that should be adopted in relation to major aspects of the provision of those statistical services; and*
- c. *any other matters relating generally to those statistical services.*

The Australian Statistician keeps the Council informed of key developments related to the ABS. The Chairperson meets regularly with the Minister and Australian Statistician to ensure relevant advice and assistance from the Council are available to them.

The ABS Act provides that the Council shall consist of a part-time Chairperson, the Australian Statistician (ex officio), and between ten and 22 part-time members, including one nominee from each State Premier or Territory Chief Minister. The responsible Minister appoints the Council Chairperson for five years and members for periods of up to three years. Members are eligible for reappointment when their membership expires. The membership of the Council as at 30 June 2017 totalled 16.

The Council meets in formal session two to three times a year, as well as interacting out of session on specific matters requiring its attention.

Subsection 24(1) of the ABS Act provides that: the Council must, as soon as practicable after 30 June in each year, prepare and submit to the Minister, for presentation to the Parliament, a report relating to matters connected with the operation of this Act.

## **Operation of ASAC**

Members of the Council are appointed by the Commonwealth Minister with responsibility for the ABS.

The Chairperson of the Council receives an annual fee, set by the Remuneration Tribunal, and all members are paid a set allowance to support their attendance at meetings, where applicable. Apart from the Chairperson, members serving on the Council do so in an honorary capacity.

Secretariat services for ASAC are provided by staff drawn from the ABS. The office of ASAC Secretary is held by the Program Manager, Data Integration Partnerships Branch. Secretariat support from the ABS includes organising and recording meetings, administering membership and the Council website, and assisting in the preparation of the Council's Annual Report and any submissions or papers under its authority.

All costs associated with the operations of ASAC are met from the ABS budget.

## **Summary of Activities for 2016-17**

### **SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES FOR 2016-17**

The Council held two meetings during 2016-17: on 15 November 2016 and 21 March 2017 (refer to Agenda for ASAC listings). The proposed June 2017 meeting was deferred until August 2017 to enable more members to attend. (ASAC also conducted a strategic workshop in June 2016, detailed in last year's annual report.)

### **2016 Census of Population and Housing**

The Census featured heavily in discussions at each meeting.

The Council discussed both the origins and potential consequences of the digital system failure on Census night. Members provided their assessment of the impact on public trust and considered actions by the ABS needed to address this and to enhance stakeholder relations. Prior to the Census, the Council had discussed and advised on a number of issues, including the debate over the retention of names and addresses. Members noted the damage caused by inaccuracies and misinformation within the media and the need for the ABS to correct these in a timely way. Wider implications for the development of an effective communication strategy were discussed. Council members considered

that they could play a useful supportive role by providing factual reporting within their communities of influence.

The Council has been strongly supportive of the move to a 'digital first' Census, which it sees as bringing advantages for users as well as improved cost-effectiveness and timeliness. The Council was pleased that, notwithstanding the problems encountered, the ABS achieved a response rate comparable to earlier Censuses, with an increase in online submission. The Council strongly supported the Statistician's decision to convene an Independent Assurance Panel to assess the quality of Census data. The Panel, chaired by Professor Sandra Harding (a former Chairperson of ASAC), included ASAC member Anton Voss and ASAC member designate Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver AM. Its final assessment was that 2016 Census data are 'fit-for-purpose' and can be used with confidence.

The Council also discussed the MacGibbon Review and the Australian Senate's Census Inquiry. It noted that in his report, Mr MacGibbon had supported the decision to take down the Census site. It agreed with the Review's finding that issues around the Census involved not just deficiencies in technology but extended to organisational culture. The Council was briefed by the ABS on a range of actions being taken to bring about cultural change and was pleased to observe the leadership currently being exercised in this crucial area. It was informed that the ABS accepted and is implementing all of the MacGibbon Review recommendations. The main recommendations of the Senate's majority report have also been accepted or noted, with the exception of one recommendation relating to the Minister assisting in the appointment of senior ABS staff. The Council concurred with the ABS response to this recommendation.

## **Productivity Commission Inquiry into Data Availability and Use**

The Productivity Commission's Draft Report on Data Availability and Use, was released in November 2016 with the Final Report released in May 2017. The Council welcomed the importance that it has assigned to addressing the duplication of effort, poor coordination and fragmentation across Australia's statistical system, issues of long-standing concern to the Council.

ASAC provided an initial submission to the Inquiry, as well as one responding to the Draft Report. The latter drew attention to four issues in particular:

- The need for a policy framework across all levels of government to support truly national data governance and ensure better management and use of quality administrative data.
- The opportunity to leverage the 'Essential Statistical Assets for Australia' initiative as a basis for identifying National Interest Datasets.
- The importance of institutional arrangements that recognise the role of states and territories as partners in Australia's statistical system.
- The need to improve data skills across all levels of government in order to realise efficient and effective production and use of data.

The Council welcomed the broad directions outlined in the Final Report, particularly the drive to encourage better sharing and use of data. However, the practical implementation of the recommendations will be a challenging and complex exercise. It will also require a significant investment. In a tight fiscal environment and with data skills already in great demand, government will need to ensure it balances prioritising report recommendations against other data initiatives.

In its submission to the Inquiry, the Council stressed the importance of state and territory participation in national data reform, with state data initiatives moving forward rapidly. In this environment, the ABS is well placed to extend its leadership role, given its unique experience over the years in producing coherent national statistics from a wide range of sources.

## **Data Reform Agenda**

State and territory governments have been seeking to overcome barriers and restrictions to data sharing and integration through:

- introduction of data sharing legislation (New South Wales, South Australia)
- investment in data integration capabilities (e.g. South Australian Office for Data Analytics, Victorian Centre for Data Insights, Queensland Government Statistician's Office and the New South Wales Data Analytics Centre).

The Council welcomed presentations made to it during the year by the New South Wales Data Analytics Centre, and officials from the South Australian Government, the latter in relation to its *Public Sector (Data Sharing) Bill 2016* (which established the Office for Data Analytics). There are a number of common issues across these initiatives that also apply to the work of the ABS, notably:

- privacy issues, including codes of conduct and legislated obligations
- nationally accepted standards regarding what is considered 'personally identifiable' data
- governance and engagement processes to ensure projects address identified policy needs.

ASAC was pleased to note that the ABS is collaborating with government partners to build trust in the quality, confidentiality, and value of integrating public sector data, as shown, for example, by its leadership of data integration projects involving multiple Commonwealth agencies. The Council considered that flagship projects such as the Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP) and the Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment (BLADE) demonstrate what can be achieved to provide new policy insights through safe and efficient use of data that has already been collected. Integrated datasets of this kind are valuable to researching cross-sectoral policy issues.

The Council continues to support the further development and acceleration of data integration activities as a mechanism for advancing the effective utilisation and thus value of public sector data.

## **ABS Forward Work Program and Budget**

The Council discussed the ABS 2016–17 work program and performance against four strategic priorities:

- delivery of the Census
- delivering and maintaining the quality of key statistics
- progressing microdata access and integrated data
- transforming the ABS for the future.

Members advised on balancing statistical priorities and meeting the demand for new and innovative statistics within budgets set by Government.

At the March 2017 meeting, the Statistician consulted the Council on the comprehensive review by the ABS of its statistical forward work program and options for rationalisation and enhancement of datasets under budgetary pressure. Members were provided with an update on the ABS funding profile, including projected reductions in appropriations and the ABS' reliance on user funding, particularly for key social statistics.

It was noted that in the absence of additional funding, difficult decisions around prioritisation of statistical products will be required. Given that very little data currently being collected do not have strong support, the ABS would need to continue to engage effectively with relevant stakeholders on the trade-offs involved.

In response to the ABS, the Council commented on the overall shape of the statistical program and the scope for reducing or ceasing a number of collections, including through the utilisation of alternative data sources, and modified reporting arrangement for other collections. The Council raised a number of issues in relation to managing the impacts of the efficiency dividend, including the importance of transparent decision-making for any changes to collections, and the social value of datasets under review relative to limited associated fiscal savings.

In so doing, it was evident to the Council that current funding arrangements pose risks for important statistical resources, with little capacity to make enhancements as our economy and society grow in scale and complexity. Notwithstanding significant operational savings and the tapping of funding from users of specific collections (mainly within the public sector) the real declines in its annual appropriation have become increasingly hard for the ABS to accommodate without diminishing its outputs or their quality. The Council noted that statistical bodies in New Zealand and Canada appear to be much more highly funded in proportionate terms.

The impacts of under-funding have been compounded by public sector staffing rules that, perversely, prevent user funds being drawn on to employ extra staff needed to produce the data in demand.

The Council believes that these matters need to be addressed by the Government as a matter of urgency.

## **ABS Transformation Agenda**

ASAC has continued to provide feedback to the ABS as it moves forward with its transformation agenda. The Council has seen evidence of significant progress across all dimensions of transformation, and provided specific advice on matters relating to governance, culture, workforce and infrastructure. ASAC anticipates improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of ABS operations and enhanced stakeholder relations as a consequence of its responses to a number of recent reviews (including those undertaken after the Census).

An overview of new governance structures, following a commissioned review, was presented to the Council at its March meeting. Membership of the multiple external advisory fora was seen as a key issue, along with the nature and frequency of meetings.

The Council has been taking a keen interest in the approach of the ABS to cultural change. This process started three years ago at the time of the Capability Review and the then Treasury Secretary's 'Review of the Australian Bureau of Statistics'. While some issues faced by the ABS were found to be similar to those of other government agencies, the Bureau's independence and distance from politics brought both challenges and opportunities.

It was acknowledged that the increase in two-way sharing of staff across agencies has been a positive development, while increased access and use of data by key partners has proven beneficial for both the ABS and its partners.

Progress of the Statistical Business Transformation Program (SBTP) has been monitored by the Council, and featured in discussion at each ASAC meeting in 2016–17. The Council acknowledged that the June 2016 mid-stage Gateway Review found an acceptable level of delivery. The Program was on track to achieve deliverables required at that time for the ABS to secure the remaining funding to complete the Program. The next Gateway Review is scheduled for November 2017.

The Council welcomed the investment in infrastructure, and confidence shown by Commonwealth partners in supporting the ABS as the whole of government integrator. Members recognised the importance of data integration at the unit record level and how seamless access to such data could attract international as well as domestic users. The Council nevertheless flagged that a strategy may also be needed to encourage users to develop capability in the use of data.

## **ASAC Role and Operations**

At his final meeting in November 2016, the outgoing Chairperson, Geoff Allen AM, told Council members he was delighted with the appointment of Professor Gary Banks AO as his successor, and said his experience, standing in the policy community and personal qualities made him ideal for the role.

At its March 2017 meeting, the first with its newly appointed Chairperson, the Council had an open discussion on the contemporary role and operations of ASAC. This affirmed that the Council's strength lay in its ability to provide high level strategic advice as a 'critical friend' of the ABS, assisting with key judgements about priorities, engagement and risks, as well as it being an advocate of influence for

better national statistical resources.

Members endorsed the need for breadth and seniority of representation on the Council, noting that ASAC meetings had benefitted from senior appointments at the state level during the past year. ASAC's de facto status as a 'national' institution depended on representation from across all jurisdictions. It was agreed that in circumstances where jurisdictional representatives were unable to attend particular meetings, suitable nominees could represent them.

Council members are appointed for their ability to identify emerging issues and needs and bring these to the attention of the ABS, while also assisting in promoting the value of greater coordination nationally and within jurisdictions and sectors. The Council agreed that there may also be circumstances where it would be appropriate for ASAC members to advocate in support of the ABS itself, with the need for clarification of issues arising in the recent Census a case in point.

ASAC will continue to provide guidance to the ABS in assessing trade-offs around priorities and other aspects of its work program.

A formal 'Statement of Intent' outlining the role of ASAC and its operations and priorities for 2017 was endorsed by members.

## **The Year Ahead: 2017-18**

### **THE YEAR AHEAD: 2017-18**

#### **ABS Forward Work Program Priorities**

The Council supports the strategic priorities of the ABS Forward Work Program in 2017–18, which are:

- Maintaining the quality of official statistics – including through prioritisation of statistical products.
- Transforming the ABS to meet future needs and opportunities – including through the Statistical Business Transformation Program and cultural change.
- Maximising the value of public data through data integration and improved microdata access – including implementation of the Data Integration Partnership for Australia (DIPA).

ASAC will continue to advise the ABS in each of those areas as well as on appropriate strategies to manage risk without stifling innovation and collaboration. The Council accepts the need for continued high priority and low tolerance for risk in relation to the National Accounts, Consumer Price Index, Labour Force Statistics and Estimated Resident Population.

In 2018, the ABS will undertake its biennial Stakeholder Relationship Health Assessment. The Council will continue to provide feedback on progress in achieving effective stakeholder relationships, including participation in the assessment.

#### **2021 Census of Population and Housing**

Planning for the next five yearly Census has already begun, and ASAC has been taking a close interest in a number of aspects.

The Council welcomes the steps being taken by the ABS to embed learnings from the events of 2016 (including acting on findings and recommendations from the MacGibbon Review, the Senate Census Inquiry and the Census Independent Assurance Panel). Council members will continue to offer advice in a number of areas crucial to achieving good outcomes, including governance, risk management, partnerships and communications. In the case of governance, the Council considers that the ABS has established a robust framework, including renewed provision for independent advice and assurance.

The Council will seek to assist the ABS further to the extent that significant public concerns or media

issues arise. At the same time, where appropriate, members will provide support for the Census and encourage participation in community consultation.

## Reform of Australia's Statistical System

The Government's forthcoming response to the final report of the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Data Availability and Use will have significant implications for the development of Australia's data and statistical system.

The Council will continue to engage in this work, recognising the need to:

- achieve legislative reform to regulate digital data to enable better sharing and release of data
- apply a risk-based approach to data sharing and release
- identify, and invest in, high-value or nationally significant datasets
- implement data management standards to support increased data availability and use.

## Remaking the Statistics Determination

ASAC is providing advice to the ABS on changes that could be made to the *Statistics Determination 1983* (the Determination). The Determination allows for the release or disclosure of certain statistical information, provided that is not likely to enable the identification of a person. The Determination was last updated in 2004 and is due to lapse in October 2018.

The remaking of the Determination provides an important opportunity to consider whether it remains fit for purpose, given the growing need for data to support research, innovation, policy and decision making. Possible changes will also recognise expectations of appropriate access, and the crucial importance of preserving the trust of those providing information. A public consultation process will be conducted by the Australian Department of the Treasury in conjunction with the ABS. ASAC has emphasised the importance of effective consultation and engagement processes to achieving the right outcome.

## Data Integration Partnership for Australia

The Council welcomes the recent announcement by the Government that it will fund the Data Integration Partnership for Australia (DIPA), and the key role for the ABS as the primary integrating authority. The DIPA is a co-ordinated Australian Public Service investment to maximise the use and value of government data through their greater integration, enabling more cost effective and timely policy evaluation and development, and service delivery. It will make possible new insights about families, communities, industries and the economy as a whole.

The Government's investment amounts to just over \$130 million and includes \$38 million for the ABS' contribution over the years 2017–18 to 2019–20. The DIPA involves three components:

- building social licence for data use and sharing
- developing enduring data assets
- a hub and spoke model for data analysis to address complex, cross-portfolio projects.

The Council notes that the DIPA builds on extensive work by the ABS on data integration over the last fifteen years, and forms part of the broader ABS data integration program. Data integration remains a priority for the ABS into the future – both strategically and operationally. Within the first year, the Council will assist the ABS by advising on key deliverables, including:

- robust governance arrangements
- ongoing development of enduring data assets and associated infrastructure to support policy analytical needs
- prioritisation of the broader ABS data integration program.

# Membership of ASAC

## MEMBERSHIP OF ASAC

Member	Date First Appointed
<b>Professor Gary Banks AO</b> Professional Fellow, Melbourne Institute (Former CEO and Dean of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government)	28 February 2017
<b>Mr David W. Kalisch</b> Australian Statistician (ex-officio)	15 December 2014
<b>Dr Carlee McLeisch PSM</b> Deputy Secretary, Fiscal and Economic Group, New South Wales Treasury	19 December 2016
<b>Ms Amy Auster</b> Deputy Secretary, Economic Division, Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance	23 March 2017
<b>Mr Antony Skinner</b> Queensland Government Statistician, Queensland Treasury	8 April 2013
<b>Mr Kurt Sibma</b> Acting Director, Performance and Evaluation, Western Australian Department of Treasury	9 July 2015
<b>Mr Chris McGowan</b> Executive Director, Intergovernmental Relations, South Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet	23 May 2011
<b>Mr Anton Voss</b> Deputy Secretary, Economic and Financial Policy Division, Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance	14 July 2014
<b>Mr Craig Graham</b> Under Treasurer, Northern Territory Department of Treasury and Finance	26 April 2016
<b>Ms Kathy Goth</b> Director, Economic and Financial Analysis Branch, Australian Capital Territory Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	1 October 2014
<b>Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark</b> Professor of Economics, University of Sydney	2 November 2015
<b>Dr Luci Ellis</b> Assistant Governor (Economic), Reserve Bank of Australia	2 November 2015
<b>Ms Lisa Groppe</b> Chief Economist, Business Council of Australia	2 November 2015
<b>Mr Nigel Ray PSM</b> Deputy Secretary, Macroeconomic Group, The Treasury	2 November 2015
<b>Professor Judith Sloan</b> Honorary Professional Fellow, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne	2 November 2015
<b>Mr Stephen Walters</b> Chief Economist, Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD)	2 November 2015

## Changes in Membership between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2017

Mr Geoff Allen AM, who chaired ASAC with distinction since 2007, retired on 27 February 2017.

Mr Mark Johnstone, a member of the Council since April 2016, resigned in November 2016.

## Agenda for ASAC Meetings

### AGENDA FOR ASAC MEETINGS

#### 15 November 2016 Meeting – Agenda

1. Introduction and Chairperson's Report
2. Minister's Comments\*
3. Statistician's Report
4. Briefing: 2016 Census of Population and Housing
5. Briefing: ABS Transformation – including update on Statistical Business Transformation Program
6. Update on Productivity Commission Inquiry into Data Availability and Use
7. ASAC Business: 2016 Activities, 2017 Priorities and Developing ASAC
8. State/Territory Initiatives Supporting the Statistical System – NSW Data Analytics Centre
9. Bringing Forward Member Issues
10. Members Closed Session

\* This agenda item did not take place.

#### 21 March 2017 Meeting – Agenda

1. Welcome and Introduction
2. Statistician's Report – Update on the ABS 2017–18 Forward Work Program
3. ASAC's Role and Directions 2017
4. 2016 Census Update – Independent Assurance Panel; 2016 Data Releases
5. Responses to Reviews – MacGibbon; Senate Census Inquiry; Functional and Efficiency
6. Statistical Business Transformation Program Update
7. Data Integration Matters – South Australia Data Sharing Legislation
8. Data Integration Matters – ABS Data Integration Update
9. 2021 Census Strategy

## 2017 ASAC Statement of Intent

### 2017 ASAC STATEMENT OF INTENT

#### Purpose and Role of ASAC

1 The Australian Statistics Advisory Council (ASAC) was established by the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* (the ABS Act).

The ABS Act (section 18) states that:

- 1) The functions of the Council are to advise the Minister and the Statistician in relation to:
  - (a) the improvement, extension and co-ordination of statistical services provided for public purposes in Australia;
  - (b) annual and longer term priorities and programs of work that should be adopted in relation to major aspects of the provision of those statistical services; and
  - (c) any other matters relating generally to those statistical services.
- 2) Either the Minister or the Statistician, or both of them, may refer matters of the kind referred to in subsection (1) to the Council for the purpose of seeking the advice of the Council in relation to those

matters.

**2** In line with its legislated functions, ASAC will represent government and community interests by advising the Minister and the Australian Statistician on Australia's current and longer-term statistical priorities and how the ABS work program can deliver on them.

**3** As an advisory forum to the ABS with broad membership and understanding of the wider environment, ASAC will:

- Advise the Minister and the ABS in relation to the ABS' functions
- Provide input into the strategic directions, risks, priorities and key deliverables of the ABS
- Advocate for an effective national statistical system and support the ABS' role within it
- Report annually to Parliament.

**4** To help the ABS respond to issues and plan for the future, ASAC will:

- Provide the ABS with frank advice and feedback
- Draw on the expertise of ASAC members and seek input from stakeholders
- Raise risks and identify potential issues
- Provide guidance to ensure the ABS remains a trusted and relevant data provider.

**5** The Chairperson of ASAC will provide advice to the Minister and report back to ASAC meetings.

**6** ASAC's membership will be balanced to ensure varied community and government representation while remaining of a manageable size. Members will have the seniority to navigate and influence the political and data environments, and by understanding the key aspects and drivers of the statistical system, will ensure ASAC retains a strategic focus.

## Potential Priorities for 2017

**1** Build trust in the quality of 2016 Census results and the important role of name and address retention in supporting data integration initiatives.

**2** Help position the ABS to respond to a dynamic operating environment, advising the Statistician on emerging risks and statistical needs while seeking opportunities to promote the full range of ABS expertise.

**3** Help the ABS to strengthen its relationships with stakeholders, draw upon external expertise and become a more connected and responsive partner.

**4** Monitor ABS progress against its Transformation goals to ensure the ABS maximises opportunities, manages risk and operates as a high-performing organisation — e.g. in the areas of corporate governance, cultural change and the Statistical Business Transformation program.

**5** Take an active role in shaping the Australian statistical system and its priorities.

## 2017 Directions

**1** Three face-to-face meetings are planned for 2017, with further opportunities for engagement as required between meetings. In addition to the Canberra meeting in March, it is proposed to hold meetings this year in Melbourne (August) and Sydney (November).

**2** In line with requirements prescribed in subsection 24(1) of the ABS Act, ASAC will continue to provide an annual report to the Minister.

## Freedom of Information Statement

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION STATEMENT**

Below is a statement, as required by section 8 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, about the structure of ASAC and how members of the public can obtain access to information held by the Council.

### **ESTABLISHMENT, ORGANISATION AND FUNCTIONS**

For information regarding the establishment, organisation and function of ASAC see About ASAC.

### **POWERS**

As an advisory body, ASAC has no decision-making or other powers directly affecting members of the public. It does not administer any enactments or schemes.

### **ARRANGEMENTS FOR OUTSIDE PARTICIPATION**

ASAC members are appointed by the Minister responsible for the ABS so that a broad range of views and interests are reflected in the advice that it offers to the Minister and the Australian Statistician. For membership details see Membership of ASAC.

Persons or bodies outside the Australian Government administration may participate in the Council's policy formulation by making representations to the Minister or the Chair on matters of concern to them.

### **CATEGORIES OF DOCUMENTS**

The ASAC Annual Report, which is tabled in Parliament, is available from all ABS offices, and on the ASAC and ABS websites. The ABS maintains files, on behalf of ASAC, which contain documents relating to: the administration of the Council; papers discussed at Council meetings; summary records of proceedings of meetings; and correspondence relating to the activities of the Council.

### **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION PROCEDURES AND INITIAL CONTACT POINTS**

All inquiries concerning access to documents, including inquiries under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, may be directed on weekdays, between 8.30am and 4.30pm to:

#### **Secretary**

Australian Statistics Advisory Council  
c/- Australian Bureau of Statistics  
Locked Bag 10  
Belconnen ACT 2616

Telephone: 02 6252 5315

## **About this Release**

Outlines the functions of the Australian Statistics Advisory Council and describes the activities undertaken by the Council to discharge its responsibilities during 2016-17